

---

ICANN80 | PF – At-Large AFRALO: Building a Multilingual Internet - Opportunities and Challenges  
Monday, June 10, 2024 – 10:45 to 12:15 KGL

YEŞİM SAĞLAM:

Hello and welcome to AFRALO Building a Multilingual Internet— Opportunities and Challenges. My name is Yeşim Sağlam and I'm the remote participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior.

During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, please unmute your line to speak. Onsite participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Interpretation for this session will include English, French, and Arabic. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak, if speaking a language other than English. Please remember to speak at a reasonable pace.

With that, I will hand the floor over to Hadia El Miniawi, AFRALO Chair. Thank you.

HADIA EL MINIAWI:

Welcome, everyone, to the AFRALO sessions at ICANN80, here in Kigali. The theme of AFRALO's sessions this meeting is Bridging the Digital Divide: Connecting Cultures for Africa's Digital Empowerment. A few minutes ago, we completed our first roundtable discussion, which

---

***Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.***

focused on the DNS infrastructure in Africa. Now, we move on to our second topic, Building a Multilingual Internet—Opportunities and Challenges.

We are honored to be joined today by Mr. Gabriel Karsan, a member of the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance, from Tanzania, and Honorable Lydia, a member of APNIG, the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance, from Ghana. Dr. Jabhera Matogoro also will be representing AFRALO At-Large Structures.

We have also with us today Dr. Sarmad Hussain, Senior Director of IDN and Universal Acceptance Programs at ICANN; Amina Ramallan, a universal acceptance ambassador from Nigeria; Nabil Benamar, vice chair of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group; Dr. Catherine Adeya, ICANN Board member from Africa; Ms. Nodumo Dhlamini from the Association of African Universities; and Mr. Pierre Dandjinou and Yaovi Atohoun from ICANN Global Stakeholder Engagement for Africa.

This session will be moderated by colleagues, [Anil Kumar], who is joining us remotely, Dr. Aziz Hilali, an AFRALO ALAC member, and Dr. Houda Chihi, an AFRALO African Fellow. With that, I hand the floor to Dr. Aziz. Dr. Aziz, the floor is yours.

AZIZ HILALI:

Good morning. My name is Aziz Hilali. I am professor and I'm also ALAC member. So welcome to our roundtable about Building a Multilingual Internet—Opportunities and Challenges. Today we will explore the importance of multilingualism in achieving global inclusivity on the

Internet, with a particular focus on Africa. As the technology and connectivity evolve rapidly, it is crucial to promote language diversity online so that everyone can fully participate in the digital ecosystem.

The next [inaudible] in Internet users will primarily come from regions where the Latin alphabet is not dominant. For these new users, multilingualism on the Internet is essential for creating content in their native and local languages. For these new users, it is also important to enable the writing of URL and e-mail addresses in their local languages, allowing for easier access and communications.

This session, to identify effective strategies to promote multilingualism and local content in Africa. We will also discuss the adoption of universal acceptance and its implications for the continent. The history and evolution of domain names highlights the importance of linguistic diversity online. And the internationalization of e-mail addresses and the adoption of UA are crucial to ensuring that the Internet is accessible to all, regardless of their language or scripts. [While the authorization] of new gTLDs and internationalized domain names has encouraged diversity, adapting systems to handle all TLDs [inaudible] remains a technical challenge to achieve [total] digital inclusivity.

Thank you for your presence and active participation. We also extend our gratitude to all the speakers who have accepted to participate in this panel and contribute to this roundtable discussion.

So to kick off our discussion, I would like to invite Mrs. Hon. Lydia and Mr. Gabriel. Hon. Lydia, member of the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance, APNIG, from Ghana. Mr. Gabriel Karsan,

member of the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance from Tanzania. My first question is how crucial is multilingualism to achieving global inclusivity and what steps can be taken to better represent African population online? This question is for Mrs. Lydia. You have the floor.

AKAVARIVA LYDIA LAMISI:

Thank you for this all-important question. This question will be requiring a very important academic exercise. But I just want to tick it on, yes, it's important. For us to use multilingualism to achieve inclusiveness, we need just three things. We need to provide the necessary infrastructure for the teaching and learning of languages. In Africa, we have a lot—millions and millions—of languages that currently are not on the Internet. So we need a multiple approach to get these languages on the Internet platforms where people can learn and use it to achieve inclusivity.

Then again, we need deliberate policies by government, legislators, private sectors, non-governmental organizations to collaborate together to build the capacity of academia to be able to teach these languages for it to be uploaded on the Internet platforms.

Then again, we need the people—the citizens of Africa—we ourselves. We should appreciate the fact that any language can be on the Internet platform, that we can use to achieve global inclusion.

What steps can we take on the online population? It's the same. We need policies. We need collaboration. We need steps that will foster unity in the various languages. For instance, in Ghana, we have various

languages that are being taught in the universities to be uploaded on the digital platform. That can be used to help in global understanding of the Internet. And that can be used to achieve inclusion in the global platform.

For us, as legislators, we are just to put up the necessary laws that will encourage, that will foster this kind of policies, that will be able to make it possible for people to use platform for inclusion on the global scale. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you very much, Lydia. Now the floor is for Gabriel.

GABRIEL KARSAN:

Thank you very much. My name is Gabriel Karsan and I am the coordinator of the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance. I will just start with a small Swahili saying, which says [inaudible]. It translates to, “They don’t just [float]. They are being made.” There is a principle known as the Rumpelstiltskin Principle, which states that when you can name something, you have ownership of it because you understand it. It speaks to you. When we speak about languages and linguistics, these are windows of opportunity to understand human culture.

And now, as we go for a multilingual Internet, we are at the critical juncture where we are able to digitize our data and knowledge. So when we have an Internet that speaks like you, we are able to participate in the wider conscience of building digital anthropology, not just for us

but sharing the wisdom and passing on knowledge to the next generation.

It's important to define what inclusivity is and what language is because language is a human characteristic for everyone. No matter how we look, our races, and everything different, we know that deeply inside, language is a mechanism that opens up to understand. This is how we achieve people-centeredness in terms of policy because policymakers, legislators, need to speak in the languages of tech and the languages of the constituency because it does bridge the real operations of how we run governance and also how we participate in the social integration of people.

So as an African population online, it is important now to diversify our opinions and show that languages come with representation. It shows that we are part and parcel of building and taking ownership of the Internet. As we know, the Internet is a universe [and it's all for us]. So when we have DNS systems that can understand our indigenous knowledge, which we do have a lot here in Africa, like [Kinyarwanda] and all the other languages and different scripts that we have, there's so much that we could open up and there's so much we could leave to the generation that they can take active participation there.

We can see the example of how, with the growth of the Internet, we see Afropop as a culture growing so big and Africa is being represented well. Thank you.

---

AZIZ HILALI: Thank you very much, Gabriel. Now we want to give the floor to Dr. Matogoro to present the results of the survey which provides feedback from AFRALO ALSes about the importance of this topic. Dr. Matogoro.

JABHERA MATOGORO: Staff, can we have the slide? Yes. In responding to this conversation, we also shared the survey to AFRALO members to give out their views on what it takes to build a multilingual Internet and some of the opportunities and the challenges. So in this presentation, I will share out the results of the survey. Next slide.

So we had a question which was actually asking what are the challenges that affect the adoption of universal acceptance. Some of the options that we had, the lack of resources, [inaudible] infrastructure. We also had another option on the lack of technical skills, being prepared for universal acceptance readiness. And we also have another [five options] on lack of [web content]. And fourth was on lack of awareness about the existence of new gTLDs.

And also, the lack of public sector readiness to lead the way and create incentives to private sector. And the sixth option, we had universal acceptance is not yet a priority. So you can see the options. Majority of the members pointed out most of these six challenges are critical and they require immediate attention. Next slide.

We also had another question which actually requested AFRALO members to rate how critical they perceive universal acceptance in ensuring equitable treatment for all domain names, such as new gTLDs and IDNs, across Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems.

59.3% pointed out most of these are very significant, which also resonates on most of the comments that I've already given out. Like what Honorable Lydia has mentioned, this is also resonating on the same. Next slide.

Another question which we wanted to give feedback is on how AFRALO members do believe the current Internet infrastructure and applications support universal acceptance adoption, particularly in accommodating new gTLDs and IDNs. You can see a majority feel that there is very significant have been done. Around 44.4% believe that the current infrastructure and application support is very poor to support the universal acceptance. That means we still need more work to do to address that. Next slide.

The last [inaudible] was asking AFRALO members to rate, in terms of skills, how do they perceive the importance of universal acceptance adoption in facilitation the inclusion of the next [bid on] Internet users. A majority see that universal acceptance have extremely important role to address the adoption and bring the next unconnected users. Next slide.

I think this is the last one. This is just a call for action of stakeholders and participants, online and onsite. Kindly join AFRALO. When you join AFRALO, you will help us to achieve the furthering some of these. Build Internet policymaking capacity in the region, especially African region. But also, you will contribute in strengthening the consumer protection in ICANN policies. And also, when you join ICANN through the ALSes, then you will be able to identify social impact of this technical infrastructure design. And final, you will also contribute on the cultural



---

diversity [and account] when writing these technical standards. I appreciate for listening. Thank you so much.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you, professor. Now we will seek to understand how to implement strategies of promoting multilingualism with the upcoming speakers. I would like, first, to invite Sarmad Hussain. He's the senior director of IDNs and UA program at ICANN, who is joining us remotely, I think. Sarmad, please can you share with us some successful examples of domain names and e-mail addresses being used in local languages within Africa?

SARMAD HUSSAIN:

Thank you, Professor Hilali. I hope you can hear me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this forum. There are, of course, more than 2,000 languages which are spoken across the African continent. So to make the Internet accessible, we do need to support the domain names and e-mail addresses in all these languages.

Just to explain this a little more, there are many languages which are written in Latin script, which use characters which are beyond just letters A through Z and need, actually, internationalized domain names to be written, even if it is using Latin script. There are multiple examples, which include languages like Yoruba, Bassa. There are other languages which are used in other parts of the continent, like Tongo, Wolof, which use an extended Latin character set. Similarly, there's use of French language in Africa, also Arabic language in Africa.

In addition to that, there are actually many languages which are written in local scripts, which include scripts like [Nilotic], languages like Amharic, or Oromo, or others. There's a use of Tifinagh script and many other scripts. So to make Internet accessible to people who use all these different languages and scripts, it is obviously extremely important that we support these languages and scripts in the domain name system as well as e-mail addresses.

Before I go into the use of domain names and e-mails in Africa specifically, just looking more broadly across the globe, domain names are used in various sectors. They're used by governments. For example, we have examples of a Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of the government of India, which uses a Devanagiri domain name to reach out to millions of citizens.

Similarly, there are examples of use of these websites in health and safety. We saw a lot of local-language domain names during the COVID time, where these were used to disseminate local language content to local populations. We also see examples—actually include one website from Africa as well, used in Egypt. It was called [inaudible], which stands for “health.egypt.” Similarly, we saw similar websites in Thai language and other languages across the globe.

Domain names are also used in tourism. We see examples in China, in Thailand, where they use local-language websites. For example, in Thailand, for a website of a temple which promotes local tourism. And there's one, for example, in China, for the Great Wall, again targeting local Chinese tourists.

We also see these domain names in business and e-commerce, where we have Arabic domain names like [inaudible] in the Middle East. But also, in Chinese, we have domain names. For example, for insurance companies providing insurance to local citizens and using domain names in local languages provides them a much broader reach. So those are some of the examples of domain names which actually can be used in very different sectors to reach out.

As I said, there is some use of these domain names in local languages in Africa. One example I shared was the health website from Egypt during the COVID-19 time. However, I think what we see is still that there is a lot more potential to how domain names actually can be used in Africa. In all these sectors, there are a potential demand as well as opportunity to share these domain names. What we find is obviously that more obviously can be done in developing more domain names in these languages and in these scripts for Africa. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you very much, Sarmad, for this view in Africa. In the same subject, I will invite two friends, Nabil Benamar, who is the vice president of UASG, and also Yaovi Atohou, director of Stakeholder engagement and operations, Africa, at ICANN. Nabil, first, could you please highlight the roadmap of the successful implementation of universal acceptance in Africa, emphasizing the impacts of this initiative?

I know [you well]. [We've sat down] with the summit in Morocco two months ago. And we meet some universities' officials or [networks].

---

Maybe you can also give us idea about what's happened in the universities in Africa. Thank you, Nabil.

NABIL BENAMAR:

Thank you, Aziz. Thank you, everyone, for inviting me to this wonderful session about universal acceptance and multilingualism. It's my pleasure to participate in this session and to share with you some notice that we have gained from our experience with implementing universal acceptance. My thought is about how we can encourage the adoption of universal acceptance principles in Africa. Maybe it's not only about Africa. It's not a main concern for Africa.

But since we are more interested in this session about how we can implement and further push the adoption and implementation of universal acceptance, I mainly think about how we can prepare the future engineers to be aware of the possibility of implementing universal acceptance principles. This is why, in the ESG, one of the things that we have done so far is to develop the curricula for the university students and the faculty.

So now, we have a comprehensive curricula that adds to existing computer science curricula modules or micromodules that offer content that should be added or can be added to existing ones in different levels and in different modules related to computer science. Because we strongly believe that if we are not preparing the next students—the future students—for this, we will not see much more increase in the adoption of universal acceptance.

As Sarmad has just said, yes. We do have the technology. We have mainly everything that is needed for implementing universal acceptance. But we are still facing some issues regarding the number of domain names that have been created in IDNs globally, in Africa, in the Middle East also. Few countries with their own local script have been able to develop a good market or a permissive market regarding IDNs' implementation and development.

So I think that it's a multistakeholder effort that should be done. Academia has a great role to play here. With us in this session, we have Nodumo, who is the director of Association of African Universities. And I had the pleasure to meet her in a couple of meetings so far. We have exchanged some roadmaps that we can implement in Africa to bring universities to our meetings so that they can learn about the existing curricula that we have developed and how it can be implemented. Then we will seek feedback from the first one who will implement and see what worked, what's still to be improved, etc.

So my thought now is about academia. Yes, I'm open to your questions. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you very much, Professor Nabil. We will have some questions for you after. Now we have the stakeholder [specificities]. And we are fortunate to welcome Catherine Adeya, ICANN Board member from Africa, and Nodumo Dhlamini from the Association of African Universities. Their experience and insights are invaluable to our discussion on the challenges and opportunities in Africa. So the

---

question for you is what strategy ... I'll start with Catherine. What strategies have been effective in overcoming the challenges associated with adoption of UA in our continent? Thank you, Catherine.

CATHERINE ADEYA:

Thank you very much. I think this has already been discussed in various ways under the universal acceptance because ICANN and the community have been working to address this globally. And in Africa, the main project—I think my colleague is also going to discuss it—is with a partner, with the Association of African Universities. This is a project to address the UA challenges in Africa.

So I think, AAU will discuss more of the details. But I'll just focus on the fact that the project is twofold. First, it looks at the universal acceptance technical gap in websites and e-mail services of the systems of these universities.

And the second, it's really to collaborate with the universities so that they're willing to integrate the internationalized domain names and the universal acceptance in teaching in their curricula. This is really key because engaging through ... I know some people have asked why the university channel. It's just the first step in trying to make sure that we are trying to overcome these challenges as ICANN.

Also, the other thing that ICANN has been doing in collaboration with the community is organizing universal acceptance days globally since 2023. I know that there have been about 16 out of 50 events organized in Africa. There's even a Universal Acceptance Steering Group that has been appointing universal acceptance ambassadors globally. And 6 out

---

of 13 of these are from Africa. I would encourage people also to look at the site on universal acceptance to just see what else is happening in the Africa context. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you, Catherine. It's very important to start with the universities. I think it's just a good starting with the UA. So now we give the floor to Nodumo Dhlamini about the same question—how strategies have been effective in overcoming the challenges associated with adopting UA in Africa. You have the floor.

NODUMO DHLAMINI:

Thank you, Prof. Aziz. Happy to be here. In terms of strategies to include UA adoption in African universities, what we have been focusing on, initially we did a survey of about 421 member universities to find out where they are in terms of their e-mail systems and their websites. I think those statistics revealed quite a lot, especially in terms of the number of universities where both the e-mail systems and websites were compliant were much lower. Some universities were doing well in terms of e-mail systems and not doing well in terms of websites.

So that survey really formed the foundation in terms of what we then designed as a program of intervention. We've been focusing on education and training and making sure we also do one-on-one technical support with technical staff to show them how to make their websites and e-mail systems compliant.

---

We have also been working on awareness-raising through engagement and communication through the universal acceptance days that Catherine spoke about, with the focus of ensuring the higher education community—the education community in general—is a part of those engagements, particularly also the young people.

We also are identifying advocates and champions within the universities. We've sent out surveys again to understand which universities are ready to actually pilot a universal acceptance. There's quite a lot of enthusiasm. We also have gone further to ask the faculties of computer science what type of support they require. And this has been quite informative in terms of what is needed for them to move forward.

Another strategy is piloting a universal acceptance curricula adoption. We have outlined, or rather shortly state, universities that we are working on who are willing to pilot the curricula and provide feedback. Of course, there were questions around how best to do it—to develop one course and add it to the curricula or add components, chunks, wherever they fit within the existing courses.

We believe also incentives are very important—recognition of those universities that have gone the extra mile—because others will be convinced and get on the bandwagon when their colleagues demonstrate how they've done it. This program requires a lot in terms of monitoring and evaluation so that we are kept up-to-date concerning where the universities are.



There's another question which I was given but I think I will wait for Prof. Aziz. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you very much Nodumo. Now I would like to give the floor to Yaovi about the subject UA in Africa. Thank you.

YAOVI ATOHOUN:

Thank you very much, Professor Aziz. First, I want to thank you for inviting me and also to thank AFRALO, taking seriously this subject. I want to mention again any time we talk about universal acceptance, we have to keep in mind that we have universal acceptance of domain names. That is very important.

So I want everyone to leave this room, to have in mind that any time we talk about universal acceptance, it is related to domain names. So we should say normally, "universal acceptance of domain names," so once we say that, meaning we understand everything. That will help us to avoid making confusion between content. We are not talking about content. We are talking about universal acceptance of domain names.

Again, we say also "universal acceptance of domain names and e-mail addresses" so we know that e-mail addresses, when we have e-mail addresses, we have them from domain names. So once we have "universal acceptance of domain names," we can say we are talking about also universal acceptance of domain name and e-mail addresses.

So AFRALO is taking the subject very seriously. We have seen that is in some statements of AFRALO and the action AFRALO is working on. So

---

ICANN is really committed. And then, through the work we are doing with the Coalition for Digital Africa. Again, for those who were not in the previous section, we have a booth outside for the Coalition for Digital Africa. It is a program ICANN is running with many partners. And we have many projects within this Coalition for Digital Africa program.

So I want just to share some areas, when we mention the roadmaps, for successful implementation of universal acceptance in Africa. The first one is awareness and education. We have been doing that. The community have been doing a lot of awareness or education. We had many workshops. We keep continuing on awareness and education. So that is very important for this roadmap.

And as the previous speaker mentioned, there are currently some ongoing work to have some resources available, like if you take the universities, for example. The idea is to have some modules related to universal acceptance included. We know that in some academic institutions, the process is very long. But we have some universities already in Africa to pilot. So these people are ready to include some modules in what they use to teach every day. So awareness and education is very key.

Also, technical readiness is very important also in this roadmap, technical readiness. So when we have in our various organizations, we have our websites, we have our e-mail systems. So we have this readiness, very important.

We have a website. We have to ensure that when someone is filling a form in our website, for example, this person is using any e-mail address

or e-mail address with a domain name longer than what we know, three characters. We have three-character top level domain names. But today, with the new generic top level domain names, you have longer domain names. So that is one.

And then we have domain names not only in characters from A to Z. We have domain names. Even in Africa, we have people using domain names in other scripts. So we have to keep this in mind, meaning that our website should be ready to receive this e-mail address. Today, in our country, we have many services online. We have many services online today.

So this website should be ready to receive e-mail addresses with characters that are not necessarily ASCII—even if they are ASCII, that are longer. They should be ready to receive that. And also to receive e-mail addresses in other languages we are already using in Africa.

So the service providers—for example, people offering e-mail to the population in some countries—their system also should be ready. So when people send them e-mail using e-mail addresses that are not necessarily in ASCII characters. So people offering e-mail address services to population, they should have their system ready so that people, they don't lose communication. So the technical awareness is very important.

Policy and advocacy is also important and we are glad that we have our colleagues from parliament here in this meeting. I know that they are doing a lot and then the promise to also, when back home, to talk more to the people, other stakeholders in the country, so if needed, when

needed, they can consider universal acceptance of domain names something very important in their campaign of various activities they are doing.

The last point I want to raise, we need the collaboration and the community involvement is very important. So we need to collaborate. So at the country level, all the stakeholders to be together, to collaborate. We shall continue doing that. This is what I want to share so far, when I want to raise some points in the roadmap we need to take. Thank you so much, Professor Aziz.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you, Yaovi. We also have Amina Ramallan. She's the UA ambassador in Nigeria. Amina, could you share a success story or a particular challenge you have faced while promoting UA adoption?

AMINA RAMALLAN:

Good morning, everyone. The story I'm going to share has a bit of a success in it and a challenge in it. Sometime last month in Nigeria we had the second UA Day awareness commemoration. It was in collaboration with the Nigerian communications commission, AFRALO, and Green ICTi, which is an At-Large Structure of AFRALO. The UA session, it went smooth. We had the awareness session for participants. We had a technical training aspect.

However, one of the challenges we noticed was, just to piggyback on what Yaovi said, participants were having difficulty differentiating between universal acceptance of domain names and local content on the Internet in local scripts and languages. We also had one or two

participants who also were mistaking universal acceptance of domain names with universal access.

However, participants were keen to learn and very much interested in the benefits that universal acceptance comes with. They expressed the need for further awareness, continuous educational resources to stay updated on UA developments and implementation.

So I think this goes to show us that there needs to be more awareness on UA. There needs to be an amplified voice. Stakeholders need to come together. So that is just the success story and the challenge I have to share. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you , Amina. Now I would like to go back to our speakers, asking them to be brave, please. I will start with Gabriel and Lydia. How important are collaborations and partnerships in advancing the multilingual capabilities on the Internet? Could you provide an example of successful partnership, please? Thank you. Who will start, Gabriel or—

AKAVARIVA LYDIA LAMISI:

Yeah. Thank you very much for the opportunity to add something. For universal acceptance, as the other speakers have just mentioned, it's just about collaboration between the stakeholders, ICANN, government, policymakers, legislators, academia. When we put our heads together, we will be able to make a way and we'll have universal acceptance in Africa. Thank you.

GABRIEL KARSAN: Just to add briefly, I would like to state that APNIG, as a network, is open to collaborate, open to learn more. And for our parliamentarians we will take this as a priority area, beginning with the tests with our own infrastructures and websites at the parliaments and how they relate to the people. We have done some training with the Coalition for Digital Africa on this and we are open to really participate with the UA team to have these conversations on how we could widen and advocate to [standardize] having internationalized domain names and e-mail systems that are interoperable for an open Internet.

AZIZ HILALI: Thank you, Lydia and Gabriel. Now I go back to Dr. Catherine and Ms. Nodumo. Two questions. What are the key takeaways from today's session that we can take forward to help promote and implement UA in Africa? And the second question, what are the next steps for stakeholders in supporting multilingual landscape in Africa? Catherine, you have the floor.

CATHERINE ADEYA: You want what are the next steps? I think I'll focus on that. I think a lot has been said. Even Yaovi has discussed them. So there's a lot of interlapping. We are interlapping quite a bit. But I'll just encourage everyone to play their part in the universal acceptance adoption in Africa. And I've encouraged people to look at the site and also talk to some of the champions that are even here. And we have to look at it both from the perspectives of ICANN and its community, as well as the

---

local stakeholders, including the public sector, the DNS industry, academia, software applications, developers.

So for ICANN and its community, we need to continue to support both the awareness and the capacity building programs, which of course involves things like continuing to work with the AAU to see if we can integrate IDNs and UA in university curricula, training faculty in sustainable capacity building. ICANN and its community, we can continue doing more on capacity building of software application developers and e-mail system administrators. And of course, I've talked about the events.

In encouraging the local stakeholders, I think the local DNS and web hosting industry should support registering and hosting all domain names and e-mail addresses, including those in local languages and scripts. I think I'll leave it there to give others a chance. I can always come back. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you, Catherine. Now the question is for Nodumo. As a representative of Association of African Universities, what are the next steps of stakeholders in supporting a multilingual landscape in Africa?

NODUMO DHLAMINI:

Thank you, Prof. Aziz. I think the most important aspect is the work that we will do concerning piloting working with universities because, remember, we have like 2,000 universities. So what we are doing needs to be scaled up to the wider community of universities. So the lessons

that we are learning, how can we ensure the other academic stakeholders also come on board?

I think the partnership is very important because this is a multistakeholder issue. We cannot do it alone as the association. So we appreciate the partnership under the coalition because we bring various strengths in terms of addressing this technical challenge.

The other next steps are, really, I think we need to mobilize resources so that we can scale up whatever we are doing, so that it's not being implemented only by specific universities. That's all that I have to say, Prof. Aziz. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you very much, Nodumo. Now I want to give the floor to Houda to take the questions from the floor. And we have already one. It's our friend, Pastor Peters, with his hand. You can start with him.

HOUDA CHIH:

Hello. Very well, ladies and gentlemen. Now we come to the Q&A session. I'm managing this part. First of all, I want to thank you all for your presence and thank you for all the speakers for sharing your insights. So let's start by the first question. Please mention your name and to which speaker you specify your question. Thank you.

PASTOR PETERS OMORAGBON: Thank you very much. My name is Pastor Peters Omoragbon, president Nurses Across the Borders International, Nigeria. I'll quickly speak on



the suggestion I wanted to make in the first session, which is to the ICANN.org and ICANN stakeholders—how to help in the development of the DNS infrastructure in Africa. So I was going to ask if there is a lobby group within the ICANN.org—a lobby group that could lobby governments and lawmakers in various countries in trying to say that these policies and these programs are sold into the various local content. If there is no such department, that would be something that ICANN could be looking into.

Now, on the issue for today, until this very moment, I never knew there was a difference between universal acceptance domain names and universal acceptance or universal access, which was [inaudible] by Amina from Nigeria.

My question is there's a thin line between the universal acceptance domain names and the local content. How do I mean? You were talking about universal acceptance domain name and you're talking about multilingualism, in which case you also need to use local languages in developing whatever content you want to develop within the domain name.

Now, [down to] the question. Africa has about 3,000 languages. So now, which of the languages are you going to develop, to work on, within Africa to promote this universal acceptance in domain names. These are challenges I think we have to look into. As desirable as this project is, we must not lose sight of the fact that, today, how many university students can speak their local languages. How many? But these subjects are going to be taught in universities.

We have not been able to extricate ourselves from our colonial past because the languages. We have a lot of African countries that uses French as their local language. But that is not their local language. That is a colonial language. But these countries have their own local languages. So I think these are also things I want us to look into.

Lastly, I just have a question for my friend, Dr. Jabhera. In one of his recommendations, he spoke about “strengthening the consumer protection in ICANN policies.” So I just wanted him to [expostulate] on that. How do you mean by—

HOUDA CHIH: Sorry for interrupt. Thank you. Be quick, please. We have an—

PASTOR PETERS OMORAGBON: Okay. Sorry. My question is to Dr. Jabhera when he recommended that we should strengthen the consumer protection in ICANN policies. So I just wanted him to [expostulate] on how that can be done and what are these areas of the consumer protection that are lacking within the current ICANN structure. Thank you.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Let’s take a remote question. Yeşim, if you can read it, please.

YEŞİM SAĞLAM: Thank you very much. The remote question is from John McCormick. John is asking, “Has any thought been given to training existing web

---

developers on UA? They are the people who are developing websites and setting up e-mail services for their customers. The web developed from the grassroots up and trying to approach the adoption of UA in a top-down might not work as well.” Thank you.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Let’s take another question from the floor.

REMMY NWEKE: Thank you very much. Remmy Nweke is my name, from DigitalSENSE Africa, an ALS based in Nigeria. Thanks very much for the presentations.

I would like to start by saying a little response to Yaovi. It’s a comment with regards to universal acceptance of domain names and e-mail addresses. He raised a very valid point, which I think we need to take very seriously, and very fast at that, by insisting and maintaining the name being written in full and being called in full. It’s a way of rebranding, which we must all join hands to do. If you keep using UA, UA, UA, we are still making the same mistake he wanted us to correct. So we all must have this in our own consciousness and correct it adequately.

Secondly is the need to engage ICT Media in Africa. If we want to go further than what we are now, or where we want to get to, we must engage African ICT media organizations because in Africa, we have gotten a lot of them who are specialized in ICT reporting, ICT publication, and education. So it is very important that we leverage on this number of growing specialization.

---

My question now is to Catherine and the team, African universities. Given that we have over 200 universities in Africa, and there was a survey your team did with over 400, I would like to know the geographical contents of that survey. Because even if you look at something like Tunisia, for instance, it has over 200 universities. If the survey was concentrated in that area, it means other parts of Africa may not have been covered. So I would like to have an idea, or you share an idea, the coverage of that survey that was done. Thank you.

AZIZ HILALI: Remmy, can you ask your question? Because we have other participants [who will speak], please.

REMMY NWEKE: I just did. Did you get my question, Madame Catherine?

CATHERINE ADEYA: Yes. I got your question but it's more for my colleague next to me. She'll respond.

REMMY NWEKE: Okay. Great. Thank you very much.

CATHERINE ADEYA: Yes. Thank you. I got it. We've already agreed to that. She's responding.

---

NODUMA DHLAMINI: Okay. So I think you meant to say there are over 2,000 universities in Africa. The survey focused on 421. The good thing is that the 421 universities were spread across the five regions of Africa because the AAU membership involves members in North Africa, East Central, South, and then West. I would be happy to share in terms of where those universities came from. But it was representative because the membership covers the five regions of Africa. But maybe not representative vis-à-vis the total universities in Africa. So it means it was like a quarter or so of the institutions in the continent. Thank you.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Let's move to another question. Okay. Go ahead, please.

[NTEKEKE CLIFF]: Hello, everyone. My name is [Ntekeke Cliff] from the Internet Society, Ghana Chapter. As part of our [road trip to] ICANN80, we had planned to do universal acceptance awareness in different universities. We ended up doing only one university in Kampala. And the goal was to raise awareness and to promote the adoption of UA principles among software developers.

Now, my question goes out to Ms. Nodumo. The question is how can we leverage university resources and networks to promote better community awareness and adoption of UA? Thank you.

---

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Sorry. Due to the time, we will start answering the questions. And after that, I will give you the floor again, okay? Thank you. Ms. Lydia, if you can take your question, please.

AKAVARIVA LYDIA LAMISI: Thank you very much. Thank you, Pastor, for that question. That has to do with teaching or education in the universities about languages. I want to share the Ghanaian experience. Currently, we have about four, five universities in Ghana that teaches local languages, including the teachers training colleges. So if we have such a program in the country, we should be able to teach. Those people should be able to teach how people can go onto the Internet platform and create their own domain systems. As it has been taught in the universities, it can also be taught as to how we will manage to put it on the DNS.

So it is not much of a problem. I just need the collaboration between government, the academic universities, the policymakers, and ICANN as to how we can teach the people to accept it and also go on to teach the community to accept where we can have universal acceptance of DNS. Thank you.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much for sharing your insights. Mr. Nabil, if you can take your question, please.

NABIL BENAMAR: Thank you, Houda. I have heard some good questions. But I would like to go back to the definition that has been given by my friend, Yaovi.

---

Universal acceptance is merely about the scripts, not the language. Because if the language is using the Latin script, there is no issue. Yes, there are other languages that are using Latin script but they have accents. This is, for example, for French and other languages that we are using in Africa. So the problem is still there. So just to focus on the problem of the script rather than the language first.

And second, from the universal acceptance principle, it's not only about domain names and e-mail addresses but their acceptance in all applications and software. The main example that we are giving each time that we have the opportunity to talk about this is when you are filling a form and you are entering your e-mail address in non-Latin script, it will not be accepted by majority of software now. This is a frustration experience for the user because the application is set up, configured to accept only Latin script.

For those who are asking about workshops and roadmaps for developers, in the USG, we have developed some workshop material that can be used for e-mail address and e-mail providers, for e-mail services administrators, and also for developers. So you can just go to the USG website and you have all the material there. You can download and you can use them. Thank you.

HOUDA CHIH:

Thank you so much, Nabil. Let's move on. Any other questions, please? Go ahead, please. State your name.

---

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: [This woman] first.

HOUDA CHIH: Okay. So sorry. Go ahead.

FIONA ASONGA: Sorry. Probably I have missed the AFRALO meetings for so long that I was getting forgotten. Mine is to bring in the concept of the whole idea of the technical community and what they are doing to facilitate this because at the end of the day, if we have this conversation but we're not getting modalities to make sure that, on this continent, our technical community is able to facilitate domain name communication in Amharic, in Arabic, then we have dropped the ball in a very big way. We are just talking content. It's good that the session was about content—multilingual, so it's mainly content. But we need to look at how have we technically been able to facilitate this within the region.

Case in point, at [KIXP] today, we have got Ethiopia Tel that is coming into Kenya. We've got a number of Ethiopian service providers set up and coming into [play] with an Internet exchange point. But their communication and everything is in Amharic. So then, the onus is on us to make sure that we work with the DNS service providers who are hosting in Kenya to have the content also translated so that when they are looking for it, they can get it.

It doesn't make sense for Ethio Tel or Safaricom Ethiopia to [play at] [KIXP] in Amharic. Everything comes in Amharic. Then they get to the Google cache and there is nothing that they can pick out of it. That



becomes a very frustrating experience for the end user. And those are the things that we maybe need to be paying a bit of attention to.

Even as we talk about universal acceptance, what have the content managers and distributors done in our region to ensure and to facilitate universal acceptance? I know [there is none] to answer that now but it's food for thought. And we can pick it maybe in our next conversation. Thank you.

HOUDA CHIH:

Thank you so much for the question. May I recall now Mr. Sarmad, if you can take any question, please.

JABHERA MATOGORO:

Sorry. I just wanted to also respond on the comment that was given out by Pastor Peters. I know Pastor Peters is one of the active members to AFRALO and he knows the process we are taking in constructing and contributing on ICT and the government. So as a call for action for members, it's important that Africans should [not] be watching policy development. So the call for action is that end users, through the ALSes, if they are active in contributing on various ICANN policies, then at the end, we are also making our voice on how the DNS and the broader Internet could look like.

So it's very important to make sure that we are contributing on ICANN multistakeholder approach so that at the end, the end user voices could contribute to shape how the Internet and the broader infrastructure should work, especially in the African context. Thank you so much.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. So, Yaovi, if you can take a question, please.

YAOVI ATOHOUN: Thank you very much. There is a comment in the chat and it's linked to what Professor Nabil said. It is also a response to the question from Pastor Peters. So what Professor Nabil is saying is that we don't have to consider languages. We are not saying that it's not about languages. But languages are within a script. That is what Professor Nabil wanted to say.

So some people, sometimes, after sessions they say that, "We have 20 languages in our countries." We are not saying forget about the languages. The action to take is to see, "My languages are within which scripts?" That is the point Professor Nabil wanted to make.

This is a comment one post in the chat room. So we are not forgetting about languages. So when Professor Sarmad said we have more than 2,000 languages in Africa, we know that all these languages, they are in a script. So when we take Africa, for example, we see many languages are part of the Latin script. Many languages in Africa are part of the Latin script. So what we need to look at is, "Our languages in my country or my community, they are part of which script?" That is the point. So we are not forgetting about the languages.

So we need to do this homework now when you go back. There is something we talk about in universal acceptance of domain names, is the MSR. This is the repertoire. So we need to see, in our language, in

our community, do we have a special character or special code missing in the work done by the Latin script community, for example, in my country.

My language is from the Arabic script. I should go back to this repertoire and see if there is a character missing. These are the actions we need to take as individuals. So again, when we say that we should not focus about languages, so if you want to take that language individually, that is not working. So the work is done through the script.

And coming to Ethiopia, responding to the question is that the community in Ethiopia has done a tremendous work. But it's a question of communication. We had a workshop in Ethiopia and were surprised that many people in Ethiopia, they don't know that there is a big achievement in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, they have a script. And this script, the community, we have the language specialist in Ethiopia. We have the technical people, computer [scientists] in Ethiopia. They came together and they developed the rule for the zone root. So the community in Ethiopia said that, "Okay. This character is good. We can use this one. We cannot use this one."

So everything is set for Ethiopia. Now up to Ethiopia to use that one [through] this work. Because, as you mentioned, we have this language in Ethiopia. If you go to Ethiopia or you see worldwide, Ethiopia, there is something they are using. They are using this language. So everything is ready for Ethiopia to use this language or script in the domain name. So everything is ready.

And again, AFRALO is doing this work, awareness. Technical developers—Professor Nabil mentioned it. The website, USG, Universal Acceptance Steering Group. They are doing a lot of work. It's a community group. So you are also invited to join the group. We have many ambassadors in the room and they are doing a great job. So go to USG website. If you need the webinar for developers, it's something being organized already. So again, this clarification I want to add to this question. Thank you so much.

HOUDA CHIH:

Thank you so much, Yaovi, for your insights. So now let's give the floor to Mrs. Catherine.

CATHERINE ADEYA:

It's just a quick one. Even as I listened to Yaovi, I'm in the board but I know he's in Org and we are all ICANN. And a number of questions that have come out from yesterday's high-level government forum and listening in this room, I think one thing that we take back is, I think, better communication on what exactly is the language issue—what is language and how he's explaining the language in the universal acceptance.

I would like to encourage also the ambassadors and all that to demystify what they're meaning by the languages. Because then, when we talk about the 3,000 languages, we'll understand exactly the way Yaovi has said. So, Yaovi, I'm sure the Org will take this back. And you're right. There needs to be a bit more communication and I'm sure we'll all get on board.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Mr. Sarmad, if you can, please take a remark or a question.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you. So there was a question on technical training by John McCormick. I just wanted to quickly respond to that. I put in an initial response in the chat. But just to share further, ICANN Organization, as well as Universal Acceptance Steering Group and the broader community, they're all collaborating to provide technical training.

We actually identified multiple stakeholders. For example, software developers and e-mail system administrators. They are one of the top priority stakeholders for us because on the ground, even when the backend technology is available, it's really the software developers and e-mail system administrators who actually help deploy this technology in a way that it is ready to support all the different domain names and e-mail addresses.

What we do in this regard, there is a short course on universal acceptance at ICANN Learn, which people can come in, review or register, and go through at their own convenience. We also do a lot of outreach. There was actually outreach which was done in all the different parts of the world. I'll share the link in the chat shortly. We take up opportunities whenever they present to us to do technical training or outreach to a technical audience. And if you do have platforms where you think we should actually go and do more outreach, please reach out

to us at UA program at ICANN.Org and we'll make sure that we provide that training there as well.

We have been going to NOGs, network operator groups, meetings, also to different technical forums. But also, we actually run an annual program which is called Universal Acceptance Day, or UA Day. You can get more information on it at [universalacceptance.day](https://universalacceptance.day) website. But what we do through that is anyone across the globe, they can apply and host an awareness or technical training event. Details are on the website. We're just finalizing the UA Day for 2024. And in a couple of months, we will be opening the call for UA Day events for 2025.

Please help contribute to UA Day. We've had more than 20 events organized across Africa in each of the last two years. And we hope to continue to organize more events in Africa in 2025 as well. So please take that opportunity to look at that. I'll share some more resources.

There was some feedback on that. There is some challenge with the registrars are not being able to support this. For that purpose, we've actually also developed and published a UA Roadmap for Registries and Registrars, which is a technical document which walks through the process to support universal acceptance of—

HOUDA CHIH:

Sorry, Mr. Sarmad. We are at the end of the presentation. If you will please be more brief.

---

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Sure. And I've shared the link of the roadmap as well in the chat. So that's also another resource which can be shared with registrars in that context. Thank you. Back to you.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Now we come to the end of our session. We will take only two questions. So please go ahead and be very brief, please.

[MIRANJA GANA]: Hi, everyone. I'm newcomer. I have two questions. I believe collaboration is the way to go. I don't know if African Union is in the room. I'll be working together with them to provide a universal or a common language that we can use in Africa because again, we have multiple languages here. When it comes to data, language really matters. Can we have languages that we can use all through?

You've also had conversations with universities, how you can increase participation and engagement. But what are some of the programs that the youths can participate, even after they are done with their university studies? Because some of the organizations are independent. How can we best plug in and also scale up youth participation in ICANN programs?

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Okay. Catherine, please.

---

CATHERINE ADEYA: Because of time—and you’re a newcomer. We really appreciate that. Even after this, we are going to engage you on how you can find out more. But African Union, we’re also working through Smart Africa, through the Coalition for Digital Africa, which is also there, will assist. On the youth engagement, will also assist. So allow us to have a conversation outside. It would be very difficult to respond to it in this forum but we really appreciate you. Thank you.

HOUDA CHIH: Thank you so much. Mr. Aziz?

AZIZ HILALI: Thank you very much. We will have more time to discuss this important question during the Africa Space. It will be on Wednesday afternoon. Okay. Thank you.

Now we come to the end of our session. I would like to extend my thanks to all participants, speakers, and interpreters. Your contribution has been invaluable to the success of this roundtable. Thank you very much. And we would like to invite everyone to join us for a group photo. But before, Heidi, you have a message to give to them?

GISELLA GRUBER: Thank you very, Aziz. For the follow-up of this session, there is the AFRALO networking event out in tent two. But kindly not that this is by invitation only. So if you haven’t received an invitation—it would have been from my account—then unfortunately, you’re not on the list, as we are limited to numbers. But we look forward to inviting all those who



---

have been invited to the tent, which is just outside. And we will have someone there to welcome you. I think everyone's got their headsets on. I don't need to say it in French. Thank you very much.

PASTOR PETERS OMORAGBON: Gisella, sorry. I got an e-mail from you which I couldn't open. Was that the invitation? I couldn't open the invitation. I replied to you.

GISELLA GRUBER: Pastor Peters, I wouldn't leave you out.

AZIZ HILALI: Heidi will have the photo group here [inaudible].

GISELLA GRUBER: The group photo, please.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**